

Wind farm boost for EC

R2.2-bn Stormberg project has 40 turbines

By SIYA MITI
Business Reporter

A R2.2-BILLION wind farm project launched in the Stormberg (Molteno-Sterkstroom) area on Tuesday is set to boost energy supply while positioning the Eastern Cape as a “leading” wind and renewable energy hub.

Dubbed the Dorper Wind Farm, the project is driven by a consortium including Rainmaker Energy (through its subsidiary Dorper Wind Development (Pty) Ltd) and Sumitomo Corporation of Japan with black economic empowerment partners.

The 100 megawatt wind farm project is set to boost the energy department’s quest to meet its procurement objectives of 3 725MW of renewable energy. The Dorper Wind Farm is an onshore wind energy facility that will consist of 40 wind turbines, each with a generating capacity of 2.5MW.

“Power and access to this incredible resource will define the growth path of South Africa for years to come. The significance of government’s focus on diversifying the power base through moving from a reliance on traditional power sources to emergent and renewable energy will ensure the power grid is supplemented by solar and wind energy,

and thereby cut costs and enable our country’s socio-economic and industrial development,” said Rainmaker Energy executive director Luke Callcott-Stevens.

The Stormberg area situated in the northern Eastern Cape is characterised by excellent wind conditions, particularly during winter months.

“Dorper will provide a much needed boost to the region, and the development has interventions planned to promote local employment, local content, skills development and sustainable job-creation. We are working with the surrounding communities to ensure the benefits roll into their lives,” said Rainmaker Energy director Doug Jenman.

The consortium was selected preferred bidder as one of eight wind energy independent power producers (IPPs) in the first round of the Department of Energy’s Renewable Energy Independent Power Producers Procurement Programme in 2011.

Rainmaker Energy has environmental approval for over 500MW of wind power, and the Dorper Wind Farm will constitute the first 100MW phase of this greater Stormberg wind project.

In November 2012 the Dorper project company entered into a 20-year power purchase agreement with state-owned energy provider

Eskom and associated implementation agreement with the Department of Energy, enabling it to break ground. Construction on this project commenced on Tuesday, with completion and commercial operation expected in July 2014.

Communities in the vicinity of the wind farm will gain advantage through the Molteno and Sterkstroom Community Development Trust which was set up by the Dorper Wind Farm. The trust holds a 10.2% equity stake in the project.

The trust said it aimed to address social, enterprise and economic development through a variety of initiatives to be funded by income derived from its ownership stake in the project, added Callcott-Stevens.

Inkwanca Municipality mayor Mtandazo Qamngwana said the project would play an important role in dealing with the triple challenges of South Africa – boosting education, infrastructure upgrading and small, micro and medium enterprise development in the municipality and district.

Major wind farm developments in the province include, among others, the Jeffreys Bay wind farm which also recently launched construction, and three major projects planned for the Coega Industrial Development Zone. — siyam@dispatch.co.za



WINDS OF CHANGE: Celebrations for the sod turning of the Dorper wind farm took place yesterday between Molteno and Sterkstroom. The wind farm is a partnership between local South African company Rainmaker Energy and Japanese company Sumitomo Corporation. Ready for the winds of opportunity for the rural area are (from left) Sumitomo sub-Sahara officer Kyo Onojima, Rainmaker executive directors Gavin James and Luke Callcott-Stevens, and Minister Ken Okaniwa of the Japanese embassy in Pretoria
Picture: SUPPLIED